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In the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (previously presented) A food press comprising:
 - a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
 - a latch assembly adapted to maintain the lid in the closed position when activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when deactivated;
 - a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;
 - the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;
 - the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper; and
 - wherein the latch assembly automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid.
2. (currently amended) ~~The food press of claim 1, further including:~~ A food press comprising:
 - a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
 - a latch assembly adapted to maintain the lid in the closed position when activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when deactivated;
 - a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;
 - the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;
 - the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;
 - wherein the latch assembly automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid; and
 - further including a delay device configured to delay the driving of the press plate towards the lid such that the latch assembly is activated a predetermined amount of time before the press plate is driven towards the lid.

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3. (previously presented) The food press of claim 1, wherein:
the press plate has a vertical stroke between a top of the hopper and a bottom of the hopper; and
the press plate is configured to move towards the bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from the food within the hopper reaches a predetermined level.
4. (previously presented) The food press of claim 3, wherein:
the predetermined level is an amount of force greater than an amount of friction between the hopper and the press plate.
5. (previously presented) The food press of claim 3, further including:
a reversible cylinder assembly configured to move the press plate between the top of the hopper and the bottom of the hopper.
6. (previously presented) The food press of claim 5, wherein:
the reversible cylinder assembly is adapted to move downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards the bottom of the hopper when the pressure applied to the top of the press plate from the food when the hopper reaches the predetermined level.
7. (previously presented) The food press of claim 6, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
8. (previously presented) The food press of claim 7, wherein:
the cylinder assembly includes a first rod telescoping with a second rod;
the first rod being connected to the press plate and the second rod being connected to the knife assembly.

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9. (previously presented) The food press of claim 1, wherein:
the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the hopper.
10. (previously presented) The food press of claim 1, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
11. (previously presented) The food press of claim 10, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 16 pieces.
12. (previously presented) The food press of claim 10, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 20 pieces.
13. (previously presented) The food press of claim 10, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 24 pieces.
14. (previously presented) The food press of claim 1, further comprising:
a hydraulic assembly adapted to drive the press plate towards the lid.
15. (previously presented) The food press of claim 14, wherein:
the hydraulic assembly is further adapted to activate the latch assembly.
16. (previously presented) The food press of claim 15, wherein:
the latch assembly automatically deactivates when the latch assembly is not activated by the hydraulic assembly.
17. (previously presented) The food press of claim 1, further comprising:
a reversible cylinder assembly being connected to the press plate and adapted to move

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downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards a bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from rising food when the hopper reaches a predetermined level.

18. (previously presented) A food press comprising:
 - a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
 - a latch assembly adapted to maintain the lid in the closed position when activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when deactivated;
 - a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;
 - the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;
 - the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;
 - wherein the latch assembly automatically deactivates to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position after the food has been compressed within the hopper.
19. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, wherein:
 - the press plate has a vertical stroke between a top of the hopper and a bottom of the hopper; and
 - the press plate is configured to move towards the bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from the food when the hopper reaches a predetermined level.
20. (previously presented) The food press of claim 19, wherein:
 - the predetermined level is an amount of force greater than an amount of friction between the hopper and the press plate.
21. (previously presented) The food press of claim 19, further including:
 - a reversible cylinder assembly configured to move the press plate between the top of the hopper and the bottom of the hopper.

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22. (previously presented) The food press of claim 21, wherein:
the cylinder assembly is adapted to move downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards the bottom of the hopper when the pressure applied to the top of the press plate from the food within the hopper reaches the predetermined level.
23. (previously presented) The food press of claim 22, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
24. (previously presented) The food press of claim 23, wherein:
the cylinder assembly includes a first rod telescoping with a second rod; the first rod being connected to the press plate and the second rod being connected to the knife assembly.
25. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, wherein:
the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the hopper in the closed position.
26. (previously presented) The food press of claim 25, wherein:
a coil spring connected to the lid automatically rotates the lid to the open position when the latch assembly is deactivated.
27. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
28. (previously presented) The food press of claim 27, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 16 pieces.

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29. (previously presented) The food press of claim 27, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 20 pieces.
30. (previously presented) The food press of claim 27, wherein:
the knife assembly is configured to divide the food into 24 pieces.
31. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, further comprising:
a hydraulic assembly adapted to drive the press plate towards the lid.
32. (previously presented) The food press of claim 31, wherein:
the hydraulic assembly is further adapted to activate the latch assembly.
33. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, further comprising:
a reversible cylinder assembly being connected to the press plate and adapted to move
downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards a bottom of the hopper when
pressure applied to a top of the press plate from rising food within the hopper reaches a
predetermined level.
34. (previously presented) The food press of claim 18, further comprising:
an actuating mechanism for driving the press plate towards the lid when activated;
wherein the latch assembly is automatically deactivated to discontinue maintaining the
lid in the closed position when the actuating mechanism is not activated.
35. (currently amended) ~~The food press of claim 3, further including:~~ A food press
comprising:
a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
a latch assembly adapted to maintain the lid in the closed position when activated and to
discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when deactivated;
a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;

the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;
the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food
between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;

wherein the latch assembly automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed
position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid; and

wherein the press plate has a vertical stroke between a top of the hopper and a bottom
of the hopper and the press plate is configured to move towards the bottom of the hopper when
pressure applied to a top of the press plate from the food within the hopper reaches a
predetermined level; and

further including a delay device configured to delay the driving of the press plate
towards the lid such that the latch assembly is activated a predetermined amount of time before
the press plate is driven towards the lid.

36. (previously presented) The food press of claim 3, wherein:
the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the
hopper.

37. (previously presented) The food press of claim 19, wherein:
the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the
hopper in the closed position.

38. (previously presented) The food press of claim 37, wherein:
a coil spring connected to the lid automatically rotates the lid to the open position when
the latch assembly is deactivated.

39. (previously presented) A food press comprising:
a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
a closure mechanism comprising a first member on the lid and a second member on the
hopper configured to interact to maintain the lid in the closed position when the closure

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mechanism is activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the closure mechanism is deactivated;

a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;

the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;

the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper; and

wherein the closure mechanism automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid.

40. (currently amended) ~~The food press of claim 39, further including:~~ A food press comprising:

a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;

a closure mechanism comprising a first member on the lid and a second member on the hopper configured to interact to maintain the lid in the closed position when the closure mechanism is activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the closure mechanism is deactivated; and

a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;

the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate; and

the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;

wherein the closure mechanism automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid; and

further including a delay device configured to delay the driving of the press plate towards the lid such that the closure mechanism is activated a predetermined amount of time before the press plate is driven towards the lid.

41. (previously presented) The food press of claim 39, wherein:

the press plate has a vertical stroke between a top of the hopper and a bottom of the hopper; and

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the press plate is configured to move towards the bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from the food within the hopper reaches a predetermined level.

42. (previously presented) The food press of claim 41, wherein:

the predetermined level is an amount of force greater than an amount of friction between the hopper and the press plate.

43. (previously presented) The food press of claim 41, further including:

a reversible cylinder assembly configured to move the press plate between the top of the hopper and the bottom of the hopper.

44. (previously presented) The food press of claim 43, wherein:

the reversible cylinder assembly is adapted to move downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards the bottom of the hopper when the pressure applied to the top of the press plate from the food when the hopper reaches the predetermined level.

45. (previously presented) The food press of claim 39, wherein:

the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the hopper.

46. (previously presented) The food press of claim 39, further comprising:

a hydraulic assembly adapted to drive the press plate towards the lid.

47. (previously presented) The food press of claim 46, wherein:

the hydraulic assembly is further adapted to activate the closure mechanism.

48. (previously presented) The food press of claim 47, wherein:

the closure mechanism automatically deactivates when the closure mechanism is not

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activated by the hydraulic assembly.

49. (previously presented) The food press of claim 39, further comprising:

a reversible cylinder assembly being connected to the press plate and adapted to move downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards a bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from rising food when the hopper reaches a predetermined level.

50. (previously presented) A food press comprising:

a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;

a closure mechanism comprising a first member on the lid and a second member on the hopper configured to interact to maintain the lid in the closed position when the closure mechanism is activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the closure mechanism is deactivated;

a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;

the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;

the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;

wherein the closure mechanism automatically deactivates to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position after the food has been compressed within the hopper.

51. (previously presented) The food press of claim 50, wherein:

the press plate has a vertical stroke between a top of the hopper and a bottom of the hopper; and

the press plate is configured to move towards the bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from the dough when the hopper reaches a predetermined level.

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52. (previously presented) The food press of claim 51, wherein:
the predetermined level is an amount of force greater than an amount of friction
between the hopper and the press plate.
53. (previously presented) The food press of claim 51, further including:
a reversible cylinder assembly configured to move the press plate between the top of the
hopper and the bottom of the hopper.
54. (previously presented) The food press of claim 53, wherein:
the cylinder assembly is adapted to move downward in order to allow the press plate to
move towards the bottom of the hopper when the pressure applied to the top of the press plate
from the food within the hopper reaches the predetermined level.
55. (previously presented) The food press of claim 50, wherein:
the lid is rotatably connected to the hopper and adapted to compress the food within the
hopper in the closed position.
56. (previously presented) The food press of claim 55, wherein:
a coil spring connected to the lid automatically rotates the lid to the open position when
the closure mechanism is deactivated.
57. (previously presented) The food press of claim 50, further comprising:
a hydraulic assembly adapted to drive the press plate towards the lid.
58. (previously presented) The food press of claim 57, wherein:
the hydraulic assembly is further adapted to activate the closure mechanism.
59. (previously presented) The food press of claim 50, further comprising:
a reversible cylinder assembly being connected to the press plate and adapted to move

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downward in order to allow the press plate to move towards a bottom of the hopper when pressure applied to a top of the press plate from rising food within the hopper reaches a predetermined level.

60. (previously presented) The food press of claim 50, further comprising:
an actuating mechanism for driving the press plate towards the lid when activated;
wherein the closure mechanism is automatically deactivated to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the actuating mechanism is not activated.

61. (previously presented) A food press comprising:
a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
means for maintaining the lid in the closed position when the means for maintaining is activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the means for maintaining is deactivated;
a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;
the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;
the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper; and
wherein the means for maintaining automatically activates to maintain the lid in the closed position while the press plate is being driven towards the lid.

62. (previously presented) A food press comprising:
a hopper with a lid, the lid having an open position and a closed position;
means for maintaining the lid in the closed position when the means for maintaining is activated and to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position when the means for maintaining is deactivated;
a press plate vertically slidable within the hopper;
the hopper being adapted to accept food between the lid and the press plate;

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the press plate adapted to be driven towards the lid in order to compress the food between the press plate and the lid within the hopper;

wherein the means for maintaining automatically deactivates to discontinue maintaining the lid in the closed position after the food has been compressed within the hopper.

63. (previously presented) The food press of claim 9, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
64. (previously presented) The food press of claim 25, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
65. (previously presented) The food press of claim 45, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.
66. (previously presented) The food press of claim 55, further comprising:
a knife assembly adapted to protrude through the press plate and divide the food into an equal number of pieces.